

Steedman-Ross House
(1925 F Street, N. W.)
Washington, D. C.

HABS No. DC-44

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WASH
138-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
Washington, D. C. District

Historic American Buildings Survey

Prepared at Washington Office

Addendum to

Steedman-Ray House (Alexander Ray House)
(1925 F. St. Club)
1925 F. St., N.W.
Washington,
District of Columbia

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Originally recorded as
1925 F Street N.W.
Washington, D.C.

PHOTOGRAPHS

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REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ADDENDUM TO
STEEDMAN-RAY HOUSE
(Alexander Ray House)
(1925 F Street Club)

HABS No. DC-44

Location: 1925 F Street, N.W., Washington, D.C.
Northeast Corner 19th and F Streets.

Present Owner: George Washington University.

Present Occupant: Nineteen-twenty-five F Street Club, Inc.

Significance: A good example of a large town house with Greek Revival details, the Steedman-Ray House is one of the few remaining examples of its type in the city and is particularly noteworthy for its early use of terra cotta ornament. It is one of a small number of houses that remain from an important pre-Civil War neighborhood comprised largely of wealthy businessmen, government officials, and military officers. Because of its ample size and convenient location, it has been owned or occupied by a number of locally-prominent and nationally-known figures-- particularly cabinet officers and legislators. During the Civil War, the house served as headquarters for the Commissary General of Prisoners. In 1933 it became the home of the 1925 F Street Club, an exclusive private club noted for the prominence of its members and frequented by government and diplomatic officers. The present owner--The George Washington University--has announced plans for the demolition of the house and its replacement with a large office building.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1849, the tax assessment records for that year show an increase in the value of the property from \$100 to \$5,500, indicating that a house had been built.
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Legal description of property: the house is built on lot 4, square 121. The adjoining garden is lot 3, square 121. Information for the following chain of title comes from the files of the Columbia Real Estate Title Insurance Company and from the District of Columbia Registry of Wills.

Louisa Harrison inherited lots 3 and 4 from her great uncle Richard Harrison in 1841. This and the remainder of the estate were held in trust for her use before and during her marriage to John H. C. Coffin.

a. LOT 4

1848 Deed August 25, 1848, recorded December 15, 1848, in Liber J.A.S.1 folio 8.

First party: William Morton and Henry Matthews, trustees

Second party: John H. C. Coffin and Louisa Harrison Coffin

to

Third party: William Duane

Fourth party: Sarah Steedman

Louisa Coffin sold lot 4 through her trustees to Sarah Bishop Steedman, wife of Charles Steedman. The property is placed in trust for the "separate use and benefit" of Sarah Steedman. William Duane is the trustee-the arrangement under which Sarah Steedman holds the property is similar to that under which Louisa Coffin held it. They could manage their property free from their husbands' direction and not be subject to their debts.

1861 Deed June 20, 1861, recorded April 24, 1862, in Liber J.A.S.217 folio 367.

Corporation of Washington

to

Benjamin Ogle Tayloe

The City of Washington sold the property to recover taxes on lot 4 issued to trustee William Duane in 1858. The sale probably took place in 1859 rather than 1861 since the new owner Benjamin O. Tayloe could not request a deed until a two-year period had passed in which the former owners could pay the taxes and redeem the property.

1863 Deed May 18, 1863, recorded August 24, 1863, in Liber U.C.T. 11 folio 80.

Benjamin Ogle Tayloe et ux Phebe

to

William Duane, trustee

Sarah Steedman reacquires the property through her trustee.

1863 Deed July 27, 1863, recorded September 16, 1863, in Liber U.C.T. 12 folio 314.

First parties: Charles Steedman et ux Sarah (formerly Sarah Bishop), William Duane (formerly William Duane, Jr., trustee)

to

Henry A. Converse

1863 Deed July 27, 1863, recorded September 16, 1863, in
Liber U.C.T. 12 folio 323.

Henry A. Converse
to
Sarah Steedman (wife of Charles)

By these transactions Sarah Steedman abrogated all
trusts in William Duane.

1865 Deed (about) September 15, 1865, the deed was lost and
never recorded.

Charles and Sarah Steedman
to
William E. and Maria P. Spaulding

The existence of this deed is mentioned in a later
transaction.

1868 Deed January 9, 1868, recorded November 17, 1868, in
Liber D. 4 folio 46.

Charles S. Steedman et ux Sarah
William E. Spaulding et ux Maria P.
Benjamin Lowndes Jackson
to
Alexander Ray

Because the deed between the Steedmans and the
Spauldings was never recorded, the Steedmans joined in
this transaction for the purpose of clearing the
title. Benjamin Jackson joined in the deed to
indicate the release of a deed of trust which he held
on the property.

1868 Deed January 21, 1868, recorded February 4, 1868, in
Liber E.C.E. 29 folio 72.

William H. Thomas
William W. Rapley
Maria P. Spaulding
to
Alexander Ray

The Spauldings took out three deeds of trust on the
property while they owned it. A deed of trust in 1867
put the property in trust to secure William W. Rapley,
Spaulding's business partner. When the debt was paid
the property was to continue to be held in trust by
William Thomas for Maria P. Spaulding and her
children. For this reason, Thomas, Rapley, and Maria
Spaulding sign in deed transferring the property to
Alexander Ray.

b. LOT 3

1869 Deed October 25, 1869, recorded December 2, 1869, in Liber 605 folio 24.

John H. C. Coffin and Louisa Coffin
to
Alexander Ray

Coffin and his wife convey a portion of lot 3, the vacant lot adjoining lot 4, to Alexander Ray.

1873 Deed June 16, 1873, recorded June 28, 1873, in Liber 711 folio 375.

John H. C. Coffin (surviving trustee)
to
Alexander Ray

As Louisa Coffin had died, her husband conveyed the remainder of lot 3 to Ray.

LOTS 3 and 4

1871 Will dated November 25, 1871, codicil dated May 1872, in Will #83120.S.

Alexander Ray
to
Susan B. Ray

In his will and subsequent codicil Alexander Ray directed that lots 3 and 4 go to his second wife Susan B. Ray. If she died with no children, the property would pass to Ray's daughter Ellen Louisa Ray Goldsborough. If she also died with no children, the property would go in equal shares to the children of Ray's son Albert. Alexander Ray died in 1878, leaving his house to his widow.

1899 Lease May 23, 1899, recorded June 27, 1899, in Liber 2430 folio 87.

Susan B. Ray
to
Mayo Hazeltine and wife, Sophie Dallas Hazeltine

Susan B. Ray apparently died and the property passed to Ellen Goldsborough as directed in her father's will. She leased the property to the Hazeltines from October 5, 1904 to October 5, 1907. The monthly rental remained the same, however the leasee might sublet the property with written permission from the owner. This new lease was negotiated six months after Hazeltine was seriously injured in an accident.

1909 Deed June 18, 1909, recorded July 7, 1909, in Liber
3241 folio 240.
Clary Ray (unmarried)
Ella Ray Howe
Ann Caroline Ray (widow and devisee of Robert C. Ray)
to
Helen Ray Hagner (only child and heir at law of Robert
C. Ray, deceased)
to
Augustus P. Gardner

Ellen Goldsborough died in 1906 and the property
passed in equal shares to the children of Albert
Ray--Ella Ray Howe, Charles M. Ray, and Clary Ray and
to the widow and heir of the third son Robert C. Ray,
who died in 1899.

1918 Deed June 3, 1918, recorded July 6, 1918, in Liber
4090 folio 194.
George P. Gardner
George P. Gardner, Jr. (Executors and trustees for
Augustus P. Gardner)
Constance Gardner (widow of Augustus P. Gardner)
Constance G. Minot (daughter and sole heir at law of
Augustus P. Gardner)
to
William Kent

1918 Deed July 2, 1918, recorded July 6, 1918, in Liber
4090 folio 196.
William Kent
to
Elizabeth Thacher Kent (wife of said William Kent)

1921 Deed January 4, 1921, recorded February 21, 1921, in
Liber 4498 folio 178.
Elizabeth Thacher Kent and husband William
to
The American University

1935 Deed July 25, 1935, recorded July 29, 1935, in Liber
6910 folio 321.
The American University (acting herein pursuant to a
resolution of the executive committee of its Board of
Trustees)
to
Nineteen Twenty-five F Street Club, Inc.

1945 Agreement October 1, 1945, recorded January 19, 1949,
in Liber 8905 folio 278
Laura M. Gross (1925 F Street Club, Inc.)
with
American University

First party agrees to sell and convey and second party
to purchase, original lots 3 and 4 in square 121,
except the part in rear condemned for an alley, with
the improvements thereon except for the fixtures
hereinafter specifically accepted, known as 1925 F
Street, Northwest. Total price, \$133,750;"
Under this agreement the transfer of property would
occur 1) within a year after Laura Gross' death, 2) 12
months after a written request by the Club, or 3) six
months after a written notice by American University
that it needed the land for the purpose of erecting
educational buildings. At the time of the agreement
American University, which owned all the remaining
property on the north side of 1900 block of F Street,
N.W., was still contemplating a downtown graduate
center.

1966 Contract December 27, 1966

American University sold its contract rights on the
premises at 1925 F Street, N.W. to George Washington
University. (Letter from Thomas M. Raysor, Ortman,
Barbour, Welch and Bell to Samuel Gellman, President,
Columbia Real Estate Title Insurance Company, October
8, 1969.)

1968 Civil action filed December 16, 1968, in
Civil action #502-67
1925 F Street Club, Inc.
vs.
American University
George Washington University

A civil action was initiated to void the agreement of
October 1, 1945, between the F Street Club and
American University, since American University was no
longer planning a downtown campus and had agreed to
sell its rights to the property to George Washington
University. The civil action was dismissed.

1974

1925 F Street Club, Inc.
to
American University

1974 Deed July 2, 1974

American University
to
George Washington University

4. Original plan and construction: A c.1865 photograph (see HABS photocopy DC-44-1) shows the building probably much as it was originally built. The front entrance was lower than at present, the top of the transom was level with the heads of the windows. The entrance was flanked by pilasters supporting a full entablature. The brick was originally unpainted with dark shutters and white trim. The finely pointed pressed brickwork of the facade stood out vividly from the common brick of the sides. The freeze windows originally had ornamental grilles with a double circle motif. The most important decorative element of the facade is the terra cotta cornice. It consists of several decorative moldings below the frieze windows and, at the eavesline, rich bands of egg and dart and leaf and dart moldings. The soffit has mutuals, each with four guttae. Several other buildings in Washington, D.C.--some standing and others now demolished--had similar pressed brick facades and ornamental cornices. They represent some of the earliest documented uses of ornamental terra cotta in this country. The house probably originally had a two-story ell approximately half the length of the present ell. Although the wall between the main house and eel has the thickness of an exterior wall, there is no evidence of a join in the external brickwork. An early map dating from 1857 depicts the house as being L-shaped.

The grade level of F and 20th Streets in the 1870's, necessitated a second flight of steps to the main entrance. The basement windows on the front opened above grade level, while those on the rear opened into an areaway whose walls now form a short cross-hall in the basement. It is possible that the only entrance to the basement was through this areaway since the present interior basement stairs appear to be a later addition.

On the interior, the simple architrave trim of the second floor hall and the northeast bedroom may be original, as is probably the trim on the third floor. The marble mantels in the northeast and southeast rooms on the second floor also date from the period of building. It is possible that the large first floor drawing room on the east side of the central hall was

originally two rooms separated by a screen or arched opening similar to the two rooms on the west side. There was a baseboard along the west wall of the present basement stair indicating that the main stairway was originally open beneath except for the lower triangular spandrel.

5. Alterations and additions: Records show little change in the assessed value of the house from 1849 until 1869 when it jumped from \$6,000 to \$16,000. This increase reflects extensive alterations undertaken by the new owner Alexander Ray, a wealthy Georgetown businessman. Stylistic evidence suggests that Ray enlarged the entrance, adding the present pediment on consoles, the vestibule paneling, and the entrance doors. He probably also added the polygonal bay window on the east and the oriel on the west, the rear half of the ell, and a conservatory or porch. The changes on the interior were more comprehensive and probably included much of the interior trim and most of the marble mantels.

The window treatment, cornice, and baseboard in the bays (which are known to be post - 1865 additions) are identical to those in other principal first floor rooms. The two sets of glazed doors on the north wall of the drawing room were also probably added at this time. These doors have panelled interior shutters which are the same as those on the windows in the room. The shutters which are hinged to close the entire opening indicate that the openings have been doors as long as the present trim has been in place. The architrave trim in the second floor rooms differs markedly from what appears to be the original trim in the hall and northeast bedroom and was probably added by Ray. The windows above the western bay and western oriel have panelled jib doors below which give access to the roofs of the bays. This is further evidence that the trim in these rooms dates from the c.1868 remodeling.

Ray was also responsible for the addition of built-in cupboards in the butler's pantry, kitchen, and upstairs service hall. At some undetermined date narrow closets were built into all the bedrooms and the present basement stair was added under the main stair.

The oldest building permit on file for 1925 F Street (no. 37) was issued to Mayo Hazeltine in 1899 and calls for the conservatory in the reentrant angle to

be enlarged using "all supports and sash not decayed". The remodeled conservatory had two sides "of glass with sash hinged" and a tin roof. The walls were "wainscotted full height" and the "ceiling also ceiled for papering". Sanborn map of 1903 shows the conservatory to be approximately the size of the present dining room.

Permit no. 902 issued to Augustus P. Gardner in 1909 described the addition of the two bedrooms on the west side of the second floor. It called for cutting a window in the "north [probably west] wall second story". It is not clear if this was ever done since the interior trim and exterior brickwork of the bathroom windows appear to date before the 20th century. The small room above the vestibule was probably converted to a bathroom at this time since its fixtures and tile work are similar to the other. The permit also called for enlarging and enclosing the "rear porch". Although rather unspecific, this may indicate the creation of the present dining room from the old conservatory. This is corroborated by Garrison Norton, who lived in the house in 1909-1911 and remembers that his father (who was then renting from Gardner) added the dining room because the original dining room (now the bar) was too small for official entertaining. The 1899 permit indicated that some electrical wiring was done at the time.

In 1910 (permit #4881) the small rear brick addition to the ell was built.

In 1914 (permit #292) the first floor bathroom and the small closet behind it were built into the first floor service hall and the present doors between the butler's pantry and the new dining room were put in.

Laura Curtis Gross made a number of interior changes in the house, probably after she rented it in 1925. She added the two antique English pine mantels in the drawing room, the mahogany doors which fill the large arched first floor openings, the Federal-style pine mantel in the dining room, and the crystal chandeliers and sconces.

- B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure: The following is an incomplete list of the occupants of the house compiled from city directories and the Washington "Elite List". Because of the time which elapsed between the collection of data and its publication, the occupants are known to have been, in some cases, living in the house up to a year before their names appeared in the

directories. Dates in this list must therefore be regarded as approximate.

1853	Charles Steedman, 148 F (old numbering system)
1855	Charles Steedman, 148 F, Lieut. USN
1858	Charles Steedman [sic], 148 F, Capt. USN
1864	War Department: Commissary Gen. of Prisoners (Col. Wm. Hoffman)
1866-67	War Department: Inspector and Commissary Gen. of Prisoners (Major Gen. E. A. Hitchcock).
1869	Alexander Ray, 148 F, coal shipper
1870-78	Alexander Ray, 1925 F
1885-91	Nelson Brown, banker
1892-93	Mrs. Susan B. Ray, (widow of Alexander Ray)
1894	Hon. Hilary A. Herbert, Miss Herbert, Miss Edith Buell, Mr. Benjamin Micou
1895	Hon. Hilary A. Herbert, Miss Herbert, Mr. Benjamin Micou
1896	Mrs. M. J. C. Micou, Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Micou (Ella A. Herbert)
1897	Hon. H. A. Herbert, Miss Herbert, Mr. M. S. C. Micou, Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Micou
1900	Mayo W. Hazeltine, journalist
1901	Mayo W. Hazeltine, professor
1904-06	George Cabot Lodge, Clerk, Cap.
1910	Charles D. Norton, Ass't. Sec. Treasury
1911	Charles D. Norton, Private Secretary to the President
1912-19	William Kent, Congressman, California
1920	Mr. Willoughby G. Walling
1921-22	Vacant
1923-24	Lithuanian Legation
1925	Information refused
1926-31	James F. Curtis
1932-33	Mrs. Ruth Pratt
1934-	Nineteen twenty-five F Street Club, Inc.
Present	

The following is a brief biographical sketch of the people who owned or rented the property at 1925 F Street:

1. John Huntington Crane Coffin (1825-2890) husband of Louisa Harrison Coffin who inherited the house from her great-uncle. Coffin was a mathematician born in Wiscasset, Maine in 1815 and graduated from Bowdoin College in 1834. He became professor of mathematics in the U.S. Navy in 1836. In 1843 he was placed in charge of the mural circle in the Naval Observatory in Washington. In 1853 he became professor of mathematics and subsequently astronomy and navigation at the U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis. From 1866-1877, when he retired, he was director of the

"Nautical Almanac" office. He died in Washington, D.C. in 1890.

2. Charles S. Steedman (1811-1889). Steedman's wife, Sarah, owned the property from 1848-1865. Steedman was a naval officer born in Charleston, S.C. in 1811. He joined the navy in 1828 and served in the West Indies, the Mediterranean, and in the Mexican War. From 1847-55 he was attached to the Naval Observatory in Washington, D.C. He had attained the rank of Commander by the outbreak of the Civil War and, although a Southerner by birth, remained loyal to the Union. He participated in many of the important naval battles of the war. From 1869-72 he commanded the Boston Naval Yard. He retired as a rear admiral in 1873 and died in Washington in 1889. Steedman and Coffin both worked at the Naval Observatory and were undoubtedly acquaintances.
3. William E. Spaulding. Spaulding and his wife Maria owned the property from 1865-1868. With partner William W. Rapley, Spaulding purchased the burnt-out ruins of the old National Theater in 1862 and rebuilt them into the "New" National. Spaulding continued as a partner in the theater until it burned again in 1873. He then sold out to Rapley who with his son W. H. Rapley continued to own and operate the theater into the twentieth century. The son was responsible for building the present National Theater in 1922.
4. Alexander Ray and descendants. Alexander Ray was an important Georgetown businessman who with his sons, Andrew Ross, and Albert, operated a mill and a coal dock between the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal and the Potomac River. The extent of the Ray's land holdings in Georgetown can be seen in Hopkins' Atlas of 1887, plate 39. Ray's flour mill was built in 1847 on the site of one of the present buildings of the Wilkins Rogers Milling Company. It was replaced in 1922, but a plaque marks the site. Water to power the mill came from the Canal by way of Bomford Mill which stood between the Ray Mill and the canal. From an early date, the milling operations appear to have been overseen by the two sons under the firm name A. Ross Ray and Bro. Alexander Ray's name is associated in city and business directories with the coal dock. Coal came by way of the canal from Pennsylvania coal fields. From Ray's Dock at 30th and K Sts., it was transferred by means of elevated tracks to large storage areas along the Potomac river where it could be loaded into seagoing ships at the Rays' wharfs. More information about the Ray family business can be found in the HABS report on Ray's Warehouse and Office. (See DC-148.)

Alexander Ray was first married in 1822 to Harriet (or Hannette) Ross who died in 1864. They had three children, Ellen Louisa Ray Goldsborough (c.1825-1906), A. Ross (c.1826-1886), and Albert (c.1830-1882). He then married Susan B. The Ray family were obviously a well-to-do family of local prominence. The two brothers, A. Ross and Albert were among the founders of the Metropolitan Club. The daughter Ellen married Hugh Goldsborough, the only civilian member of a family which produced several Naval Admirals.

Alexander Ray lived at the N.W. corner of 20th & G for over twenty years before he purchased 1925 F Street. His son A. Ross built the large house at 1901 F in about 1863 and lived there until his death. The Goldsborough's also lived in several houses in the neighborhood.

The children of Albert Ray and Amanda J. Clary inherited the house at 1925 F Street and sold it in 1909. Ella Ray (c.1853-1938) was married to Frank H. Howe. Deed records indicated Charles Michler Ray and wife Sadie W. resided in California. He was at one time Pay Director of the Navy. Clary Ray (c.1865-1916), the youngest son, was a European-trained artist of local prominence with a studio at 1700 Pennsylvania Ave. An interview with Clary Ray which appeared in the December 19, 1903 issue of The Capitol includes several photographs of Ray's "picturesque" studio and indicates that among his commissions were "some pictures of warships" for the Navy Department. The third son Robert Clary Ray (c. 1855-1899) attended the Naval Academy but retired from the Navy shortly after graduation because of a heart ailment. He married Anna Caroline Paulding (1855-1939) daughter of Com. and Mrs. Leonard Paulding. They had one daughter, Helen Clary (c.1884-1944) who married Thomas Hagner. As Robert Ray's only heir, she inherited his share of the property at 1925 F St. Helen Ray Hagner achieved prominence as one of Washington's best-known social secretaries. She founded the Washington Social Bureau which arranged parties, receptions, and weddings for Washington's most prominent residents. In 1930 she started the "Green Book", The Social List of Washington, an enterprise carried on today by her daughter Carolyn Hagner Shaw.

After Alexander Ray's death in 1878, the house was apparently rented for a number of years. From 1885 to 1891 it was the home of Nelson Brown, identified in the 1886 City Directory as a banker.

5. Hilary A. Herbert (1834-1919). From 1894-1897, the house was occupied by Hilary A. Herbert during his tenure as

Secretary of the Navy. Herbert was born in Laurens, S.C. and was educated at the University of Alabama and the University of Virginia. He entered law practice in Greenville, Ala. in 1856. He served as an officer in the Confederate Army, participating in the battles of Manassas, Fredericksburg, Antietam, and Gettysburg. He was permanently disabled in 1864 and returned to his law practice. In 1877 he was elected to Congress and served for sixteen years. Three times he chaired the committee on naval affairs and in 1893 was appointed Secretary of the Navy by President Cleveland. In these positions he was largely responsible for the revival of the U.S. Navy. After 1897 he practiced law in Washington, D.C.

6. Mayo D. Hazeltine (1841-1909). Hazeltine and his wife Sophie Dallas leased 1925 F Street for seven years beginning in 1899. Hazeltine was educated at Harvard and Oxford and in 1878 became the literary critic of the New York Sun, a position he held until his death. He was a prolific and popular writer and contributed to a number of other magazines and periodicals. In the Washington directories he is listed both as a journalist and professor. He may, therefore, have come to Washington to teach, perhaps at Columbia College. In 1901 Hazeltine was run down by a cab in New York and permanently injured. In that year he negotiated a new lease with the Ray family which allowed him to sublet the house. It seems likely that Hazeltine moved from the city as the result of the accident.
7. George Cabot Lodge (1873-1909). George Cabot Lodge sublet the house from Mayo Hazeltine. Directories indicated that the Lodge family occupied the house from 1904-06, but they lived there at least as early as 1903 when Lodge's son John was born in the southwest bedroom. George Cabot Lodge was the son of Massachusetts Senator Henry Cabot Lodge. He received an extensive education in America and Europe and came to Washington as his father's secretary in 1897. After service in the Mexican War, he returned to the city as clerk of a Senate committee. Although little read in his own time or today, Lodge was a poet of note who moved in the most elevated intellectual circles of the day. His first volume of poetry appeared in 1898, and the strain of poetic composition contributed to his early death in 1909.
8. Henry Cabot Lodge (b.1902-). Henry Cabot Lodge, son of George Cabot Lodge and Mathilda Elizabeth Frelinghuysen Davis, lived at 1925 F Street as a child. He was elected to the U.S. Senate from Massachusetts in 1936, and served as U.S. representative to the United Nations 1953-60. Among other important diplomatic appointments, he was

Ambassador to South Vietnam 1963-64, 1965-67, and head of the U.S. delegation to the Paris Peace talks.

9. John Davis Lodge (b. 1903-). George Cabot Lodge's second son was born in the southwest bedroom of 1925 F Street in 1903. His subsequent career has included election to Congress from the Fourth District of Connecticut, Governorship of Connecticut, and appointments as ambassador to Spain (1955-61) and Argentina.
10. Augustus P. Gardner (1865-1918). Gardner was the husband of Constance Lodge, sister of George Cabot Lodge. He owned the house at 1925 F Street from 1909 until his death in 1918, but there is no evidence that he ever lived there. Gardner served as captain and assistant adjutant general on the staff of General James H. Wilson in the Spanish-American War. He was a congressman from Massachusetts from 1902 until he resigned in 1917 to enter the army. He died at Camp Wheeler, Macon, Georgia in 1918.
11. Charles Dyer Norton (1871-1922). Norton was an executive of the Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Co. in Chicago until 1909 when he was appointed Assistant Secretary of the Treasury by President Taft. He probably moved directly into the house at 1925 F Street although the directories do not list him there until 1910. In 1910, he was appointed Secretary to the President, a position which had cabinet rank. He served until 1911, when he left Washington for a career in banking in New York City. Norton's son, Garrison Norton, who served as assistant Secretary of State under Truman, has vivid memories of his childhood years in the house. He describes the neighborhood as heavily treed with white oaks which arched the streets. The area was far more residential than at present with several other large free-standing houses. The children used to go through white oak woods to reach the canal at 17th and Constitution where barges brought coal for naval vessels.
12. William Kent (1864-1928). Kent lived at 1925 F Street from 1912-1920, first renting the house from Augustus Gardner and then purchasing it from his estate in 1918. He was born in California, entered the real estate and livestock business in Chicago and then returned to California where he was elected to Congress first as a Progressive Republican and then as an Independent. He served from 1911 to 1917. He did not seek reelection and was appointed to the U.S. Tariff Commission by President Wilson, serving until 1920. He was interested in matters of conservation and promoted the appointment of a National Parks Commission. After returning to California he gave the

federal government 426 acres of redwood forest to be used as a memorial to naturalist John Muir.

Kent was married to Elizabeth Thacher, daughter of noted Yale Latin professor Thomas Anthony Thacher.

13. Willoughby G. Walling (1878-1938). Walling was a Chicago banker who devoted an extraordinary amount of time and energy to public welfare and civic organizations including hospitals, schools, libraries, music groups, and social agencies. Most of his activities were centered in Illinois. However, during the American involvement in World War I, he held various positions with the American Red Cross, including Director of Administration (1917-19), Acting Director General, Civilian Relief (1918-19), and Vice-Chairman, Central Committee (1919-1920). He was Chairman of the American Delegation to the First General Council of the League of Red Cross Societies in Geneva in March 1920. Walling is listed as living at 1925 F Street in 1920. It is possible that he was an acquaintance of the owner William Kent who had strong family and business ties in Chicago.
14. Mrs. Ruth Sears Baker Pratt (1877-1965). Born in Massachusetts, Mrs. Pratt, graduated from Wellesley College and studied the violin in Belgium. She became active in civic affairs in New York City after her 1903 marriage to John T. Pratt. Her interests gradually turned to politics and she was elected the first women member of the New York City Board of Alderman in 1925. In 1928 she was elected to Congress from New York's "silk stocking district". She was re-elected in 1930 and sublet the house at 1925 F Street from her friend Laura Curtis during her second term. She was defeated in the elections of 1932 and returned to New York at the end of her term. She continued to be active in Republican politics as a founder and president of the Women's National Republican Club and a member from 1929-43 of the Republican National Committee.

A. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Ell-shaped; 44'-7 x 75' - (including 38' ell, but not smaller rear additions) two-and-a-half stories with raised basement; a one-story 20th century dining room addition occupies the reentrant angle.
2. Foundations: Only brick is visible in basement walls, the rear ell and dining room addition are supported on brick piers.

3. Wall construction, finish and color: Brick, common bond. The facade is of pressed brick with fine joints; other walls are of common brick. The house is now painted white. References indicate that earlier in the 20th century it was painted yellow.
4. Structural system: Brick bearing wall construction.
5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads etc.: The house is approached by two sets of sandstone steps with iron handrails. The upper set of steps, at the original grade level, has molded nosings and flares out slightly. The main entrance has a chamfered wooden frame with rectangular transom topped by a pediment on consoles. It leads to a recessed panelled vestibule from the street. The vestibule is paved with black and white marble.

A small wooden enclosed porch is attached to a one-story enclosed brick porch on the rear of the ell. The brick porch was added in 1910.

The basement opening at the south end of the west wall is a coal scuttle.

6. Chimneys: There are two large chimneys, each with three flues in the east wall of the main house. There is one similar chimney in the west wall. A rather crude chimney on the north wall of the main block was added to serve the fireplace in the northeast room first floor. There is a two-flue chimney centered in the roof of the ell.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The main double door opens from the vestibule described above. Each leaf has a tall narrow light above a molded octagonal panel. There is a rectangular transom. The rear entrance to the ell is through the wooden porch. Doors open from the north side of the dining room onto the patio. The exterior entrance to the basement is down a flight of stairs along the east side of the ell.
 - b. Windows and shutters: All windows are flat brick arches. There is a wooden bay window in the center of the east wall and a similar oriel north of center of the west wall. Each has three arched windows separated by pilasters. Each window has a molded panel beneath it. The roofs are flat with modillion cornices. The second-floor windows give access to the roofs. The second-floor window on the north wall of the ell also has a jib door. There are small attic

windows in the freeze across the front and rear of the house. They no longer have the decorative grilles which appear in old photos. The facade windows have two-over-two light double-hung sash - other windows have six-over-six light sash. Central windows of the bays are two-over-two; the side windows are one-over-one.

Shutter hardware is still in place although shutters have been removed.

Basement windows have protective grilles of iron shafts with central star motif and spear-like heads at each end.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The main roof is a gable covered with standing seam tin. The ell has a shed roof, sloping to the east, also covered with tin. The dining room addition has an asphalt roof which slopes slightly to the rear.
- b. Cornice, Eaves: The cornice is the most important exterior decorative element of the facade. It has a wide frieze containing the attic windows. Below the windows are several rows of simple moldings (one is ornamental). Above is a band of simple fret work. Above that is an enriched cyma reversa molding of leaf and dart motif. The soffit mutuals each have four guttae. Above the soffit is a band of large egg and dart above which is the gutter. Physical examination indicates that this cornice is terra cotta. It was known to be in place in 1865 and appears to be original to the house. It represents a very early American use of decorative terra cotta. Several other buildings in the city, three still standing, and one demolished, had similar cornices, however the local source or distributor has not yet been discovered. There is a corbeled buck cornice with large buck dentils on the rear of the main block and on the north and west sides of the ell.

C. Description of Interior:

For a blueprint of the floor plans for the house see Field Records for this site.

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: The basement has a central stair hall with

two rooms on either side. There is a small room - now a bathroom - at the south end of the hall with windows which open under the front steps. The southwest room contains the heating and mechanical equipment. The northeast room is a locked storeroom with arched footings for the fireplace above. There is a small rear cross hall and bathroom in what was probably once an areaway. There is a north - south passage between the foundations of the ell and dining room which leads to the exterior door. At the southwest corner of this passage is a small room which was probably once an exterior storage closet. It contains an opening with an old beaded frame which gives access to the crawl space beneath the ell. There is also a crawl space beneath the dining room.

- b. First floor: The main block has a central stair hall with door at either end. Arched doorways give access to the large parlor on the east (probably originally two rooms) and the library on the west. Behind the library thru another arched opening is the present bar. There is a butler's pantry and kitchen in the ell with service stair between. The dining room is a twentieth century addition occupying the reentrant angle.
 - c. Second floor: There is a small central hall with five doors. Those on the east open into two bed chambers. The door on the south leads to a small room above the vestibule (now a bathroom). The southwest door opens into a bedchamber and the northwest door to a service hall with built-in cabinets which runs the length of the original ell. North of the southwest bedroom is another small chamber and behind that two bathrooms. A small cross hall (also with built-in cabinets) joins the service hall to the service stairs. There is a large rear bedroom above the kitchen.
 - d. Third floor: Two bedrooms with sloping ceilings are on either side of the central hall. A small central room on the south is now a bathroom.
2. Stairways: The main stair has an open well located on the west wall in the central hall and runs from first to third floors. There is a straight run to a landing, another straight run to the second floor, two additional runs and a landing to the third floor. The step ends have scroll brackets (the scrolls are simpler between second and third floors). These probably date from 1849. The area beneath the stair on the first floor is now enclosed by narrow vertical panels which hide the present stair to the

basement. This area was probably originally open except for the single triangular panel at the apex. Evidence of this can be seen in the baseboard which returns along the west wall of the present basement stairs.

The basement stairs are a utilitarian straight run with a simple handrail and no balusters. The date of its addition is not known. The enclosed service stair is a dog-leg with winders running along the north wall of the original ell (now the butler's pantry) between the first and second floors. It has simple turned balusters and newel and was probably built in 1849. It originally opened into the small cross-hall on the second floor. It is now enclosed by built-in cabinets and a 20th century fire door.

3. Flooring: First and second floors have narrow oak tongue-and-groove flooring, probably of late 19th or early 20th century vintage. Basement floors are cement and those on the third floor are covered with linoleum.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls are painted plaster. Ceilings of the first floor are also plaster. There is a complex cornice of simple, but boldly projecting, moldings in the principal rooms of the first floor, probably dating from 1869. A similar, but more subdued cornice in the main stair hall may date from 1849. Ceilings on the second and third floors are acoustical tile with a stock wooden cornice. Basement walls are painted brick.
5. Doorways and doors: There are three large arched doorways on the first floor of the main block: two in the stairhall and one slightly larger arch between the southwest and northwest rooms. All were closed in the 1920s with mahogany panelling containing rectangular six-panel double doors. Two double doors on the north wall of the east parlor lead to the present dining room. Each leaf has two tall, narrow glass panels above a recessed wooden panel. Interior shutters on these doors indicate that these openings have been doors since at least the 1869 remodeling. The doorway at the rear of the hall was once an exterior door flanked by sidelights. It now also opens into the dining room and the glazing has been replaced with wood. Most other doors in the house are identical, with six raised panels outlined with molding. The upper panels are the largest and the central panels the smallest. Doors on the third floor are simpler with two large panels over two small panels.
6. Special decorative features and trim:

- a. Mantels: There are six marble mantels in the house. The one in the southwest room, first floor, has an arched opening with heavily panelled spandrels, a decorative central cartouche, and an undulating shelf. It is made of red marble which has been painted black and marbelized. An almost identical mantel can now be found on the north wall of the bar. Most likely it was originally the front mantel in the east parlor and was moved to its present location in the 1920s. A third red marble mantel (which has had the black paint and marbelized removed) is now in the north room on the second floor. It is slightly different than the mantles described above. The spandrels are not as heavily molded and the arch springs from imposts. A fourth marble mantel of the same period is in the southwest room on the second floor. It is similar to the two downstairs but the spandrels are less heavily molded. It is white marble, also painted black and marbelized. All four mantels were probably added during the 1869 remodelling.

In the northeast and southeast bedrooms on the second floor are two marble mantels which may date from 1849. They have large tudor arch openings and simple mantel shelves. Both are white marble painted black and marbelized.

After Mrs. James Curtis moved into the house about 1925, she added the three pine mantels in the east parlor and dining room, moving marble mantels then in place to other parts of the house. According to newspaper accounts, the identical mantels in the east parlor were made from 18th century English door trim. This seems to be born out by the fact that what is now the mantel shelf is carelessly joined as if it were never intended to be seen. The mantels have architrave trim with a cornice and pulvinated frieze with foliated carving. The mantel on the west wall of the dining room is in the Federal style with elliptical patera and gougework frieze. Its origin is not yet known. The wall has been firred out to look like a chimney breast, but the fireplace is false.

The two south bedrooms on the third floor have simple colonial revival wooden mantels probably dating from the 1920s. In the northeast room of this floor there

is a simple white marble shelf supported on cast-iron brackets.

- b. Trim: The oldest trim in the house is that in the second floor hall and northeast bedroom, which probably dates from 1849. The five hall doors have simple trim with a single large bead molding and an entablature composed of superimposed blocks of wood. The baseboard was probably originally plain, although moldings have been added to the top to make it more consistent with that of the other rooms.

The window and door trim of the northeast bedroom features a simple molded cornice. The windows have similar moldings below the sill. This trim is similar to that found on the upper floors of the 1849 Peterson House (House Where Lincoln Died) (HABS No. DC-165) on 10th St., N.W.

Most windows and doors in other rooms on the first and second floor have identical molded architrave trim. The arched doorways on the first floor have wider and more elaborate molded trim. There are molded panels beneath first floor windows and windows on the south wall of the second floor. These same windows have panelled interior shutters (now painted shut), as do the north doors in east parlor. Locations of second floor panelled jib doors have already been discussed.

- c. Cupboards and cabinets: Floor to ceiling cabinets with various configurations of panelled doors and drawers were added to the butler's pantry, kitchen, second floor service hall and cross hall, probably in 1869. Narrow clothes closets were also added sometime after 1869 in all the upstairs bedrooms. Some are barely wide enough for hangers while others have hooks or shelves. The closets have five panel doors and wooden cornices. Closets of beaded boards were added on the outside walls of the four third floor bedrooms, and on the east wall of the central room (now a bathroom).

- 7. Notable hardware: On the first two floors, the door hardware consists of roundknobs of silvered metal and covered keyholes. Similar hardware in brass can be found on the first floor mahogany doors added in the 1920s. On the third floor there are still some box locks with brass or porcelain knobs.

- 8. Mechanical equipment:

- a. Heating: Mantels and their locations have been described above. [The house was probably originally heated by wood-burning fireplaces.] These were most likely converted to coal in 1869 (Alexander Ray was a wealthy coal merchant). All the mantels added in 1869 still have coal grates except the one which has been moved to the north bedroom, second floor. The two older mantels in the east bedrooms show evidence of conversion. The firebox in the northeast bedroom appears to have been bricked in to make it smaller. The plastered fireback has a stamp reading "Phila. PA/ FIREBRICK WORKS/ cor. Vine & 23rd St." It now contains a cast-iron coal grate. In the southeast bedroom, the firebox has been lined with cast iron panels imprinted with stylized waves and dragons. It is larger than the firebox in the northeast room, but still smaller than the actual opening. It contains a small brass coal grate. Third floor fireplaces have been closed. The first floor rooms now have hot air registers in the floor. The second and third floors have hot water radiators. Heating equipment is in the southwest room of the basement.
- b. Lighting: Electric throughout the house. Mrs. Curtis added crystal chandeliers and sconces in the principal rooms on first and second floors.
- c. Plumbing: The present bathrooms on the second floor were apparently added in 1909. They have rectangular tile wainscoting and hexagonal tile floors. Wainscoting floors are white. The bathrooms at the south end of the stairhall and off the central bedroom have wide oval sinks on fluted pedestals and bathtubs on paw feet. Fixtures in the bathroom opening off the rear cross hall are simpler. There is a rectangular pedestal sink and a cast-iron tub on a metal skirt. Toilets in the two bathrooms in the ell appear to date from 1909. There are four other bathrooms in the house, two in the basement, one which was added by enclosing part of the first-floor service hall in 1914, and one on the third floor.

D. Site:

- 1. General setting and orientation: The house sits on the northeast corner of 20th and F Streets, N.W., facing south. A fine row of mid-to-late 19th century row houses (ending with the house of Alexander Ray's son, A. Ross) once occupied F Street to the east. There is a late-19th century church immediately to the north. Except for the

church, some adjoining rowhouses on G Street and two small houses facing 19th Street, the entire block has been leveled by George Washington University which intends to erect a large office building there.

2. Historic landscape design: The house was always intended to be free-standing. It was situated in the southwest corner of its ample lot, leaving space on the east and rear for a garden. This garden was enlarged in 1868 and 1873, when Alexander Ray purchased the adjoining lot. The garden is maintained in an informal design with large trees surrounded by ground cover and perennial shrubs and plants. There is a rustic garden house overgrown with ivy and several pieces of rustic cast-iron garden furniture. A large back patio off the dining room is used for summer dining. The garden is enclosed on the south by a cast-iron fence on a low brick wall which extends east from the southeast corner of the house. A low stone retaining wall with sandstone coping runs along the south and west perimeters of the property abutting the sidewalks. There is a short section of wooden fencing with arched panels running north from the ell which appears to be quite old - the north and east sides of the property are also enclosed by wooden fences of recent vintage. The northern fence separates the grounds from the public alley. The west half of it rests on a red sandstone retaining wall, the eastern half on a brick wall.

The ample grounds have been an integral part of the property since shortly after the Civil War. They are not only the historical setting for the house, but provide a well - shaded open space in an area which is becoming increasingly more densely built up.

3. Outbuildings: There are no outbuildings at present. The property probably once included a stable since Ray owned several horses.

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June 1984

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1. Old views: A c.1865 view of the house from the collection of the Library of Congress is published on page 83 of Vol. II of The Photographic History of the Civil War. See bibliography for full citation.

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Stewart, Ami. "Protocal: It Leads to Georgetown's Carolyn Hagner Shaw," The Georgetownner, January 14, 1960.

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Waldrop, Frank C. "Clubs", Washingtonian, April, 1968.

Other newspaper and magazine articles can be found in the clipping files in the Washingtonian Room, Martin Luther King Library, under the heading "Clubs".

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was carried out as an emergency recording measure by the HABS staff. S. Allan Chambers and John Burns assisted in the physical inspection and description of the house. Margaret Proskauer volunteered her service in gathering biographical data on the owners and renters of the house. Drawings were prepared and donated to HABS by Anthony James, a graduate student at the University of Virginia. Nancy B. Schwartz, Architectural Historian with the National Park Service, prepared the history in March 1976. Eleni Silverman, Architectural Historian, HABS, collated the raw documentation and edited it for transmittal to the Library of Congress in June 1984.

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

INDEX TO PHOTOGRAPHS

ADDENDUM TO:
STEEDMAN-RAY HOUSE
(Alexander Ray House)
(1925 F Street Club)
1925 F Street Northwest
Washington
District of Columbia

HABS DC-44

Photographs HABS DC-44-1 through HABS DC-44-3 were previously transmitted to Library of Congress.

INDEX TO COLOR TRANSPARENCIES

Jack E. Boucher, photographer

DC-44-4 (CT) General view